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THE VERBENA PEOPLE'S PRAYER AND THE "WIN THE WAR FOR PERMANENT PEACE" CONVENTION.

With the compliments of
Samuel B. Clarke
56 Wall Street, New York City

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THE VERBENA PEOPLE'S PRAYER AND THE "WIN THE WAR FOR PERMANENT PEACE" CONVENTION.

I.

The convention.

The League to Enforce Peace, whose president is Mr. Taft, whose executive committee's chairman is Mr. A. Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University, and whose letter-paper displays a long printed membership list of deservedly eminent and influential men and women, has called a convention to be held in Philadelphia May 16-18 next. The tentative program shows that at the morning, afternoon and evening sessions on Thursday, May 16, there are to be a keynote address and discussions of what we are fighting against and of what democracy would face if it should lose the fight; that on Friday, May 17, there are to be discussions of the preparation for a league of nations, and of the machinery and uses of such a league; and that at the morning session on Saturday, May 18, there are to be addresses on a program of action for winning the war and a lasting peace; that at the afternoon session there will probably be present a large body of Governors considering what the several states of the Union may do toward stirring the popular mind to the supreme sacrifice for winning this war and the twin task of preventing another war; and that in the evening there is to be an allied war dinner attended by representatives of the allied nations associated with us in the war. By permission, one of the invitations to attend the convention is set forth here;—

"March 27, 1918.

Samuel B. Clarke, Esq.,
New York City.

Dear Sir:

We want your help in a convention on 'Win the War for Permanent Peace' that the League to Enforce Peace is calling in Philadelphia from Thursday to Saturday, May 16th-18th, and send you this advance announcement in the hope that you will arrange to attend.

The object of the convention is to sustain the determination of our people to fight until Prussian militarism has been defeated, confirm opposition to a premature peace, and to focus attention on the only advantage the American people are hoping to gain from the war,—a permanent peace guaranteed by a League of Nations.

A tentative program is enclosed on which we invite your suggestions.

Very truly yours,

J. Card. Gibbons	Wm. H. Taft
John Sharp Williams	Frances F. Cleveland Preston
Saml. Gompers	Alton B. Parker
Anna H. Shaw	A. Lawrence Lowell
Eva Perry Moore	Henry van Dyke
Edward A. Filene	John Mitchell
Cyrus H. K. Curtis	E. T. Meredith."

II.

Answer to the invitation.

"April 3, 1918.

Mr. William H. Short,
Secretary, League to Enforce Peace,
70 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Dear Sir:

Truly, I feel much honored by the invitation which you have sent me from Cardinal Gibbons, Mr. Taft and others

to attend the 'Win the War for Permanent Peace' Convention which the league has called to be held in Philadelphia next month, and to make suggestions on the tentative program for the Convention proceedings.

I approve heartily the tentative program. The principal suggestion which I have to make is that the Convention's formal action shall be limited to four resolutions;—

FIRST: *Carthago non est delenda!* The several peoples of Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Japan and the American Republics must continue free to work out their several destinies, with due regard indeed to the self-determinable rights and interests of other peoples and to the mutually-determinable common rights and interests of all human beings, but otherwise each in their several ways;

SECOND: To the effect that it is the judgment of the Convention that every road toward permanent peace will be closed, perhaps for centuries and certainly for a very long time, unless the Kaiser shall be defeated and the German people forced to accept an unprofitable peace;

THIRD: To the effect that it is the judgment of the Convention that if peace be made on the basis of a complete or partial victory for the Kaiser it will be necessary for this nation and every other nation which would maintain its liberties to follow the example of Germany during the reign of the present Kaiser and devote all their energies primarily to preparation for the next war; and

FOURTH: To the effect that it is the judgment of the Convention that the people of all religious faiths dwelling in the several church districts of the country should fortify their souls daily by following the example set for them by the people of Verbena, Alabama, as described in the enclosure.

Abstention from a league to enforce peace resolution would, I think, add greatly to the weight and influence of the four resolutions which I have recommended as part

of the league's tentative program for the Convention and would also add much to the league's prestige and future influence. I think that the resolutions ought not to say anything about a league to enforce peace because I believe that the people of this country and of most other countries are now so far divided in opinion on that subject that its specific discussion at this time would tend to divert the minds and feelings of the people and so impair their efficiency in prosecuting the war to a victorious end.

It would be a mistake, I think, to declare or assume in the resolutions that any universal or general principle of governmental group determination exists or has been discovered. The assumption of such a principle, in the present imperfect state of knowledge, is an intellectual trap within which the Kaiser's advocates will surely have the best of the argument. Till the field of knowledge of not-physical or psychical truth shall have been considerably enlarged we must regard governmental group determination as a question of the circumstances of each particular case, including the rights and interests of the human beings who are or are to be excluded from the particular group as well as the rights and interests of those who are or are to be included.

Is not the great obstacle to world-wide and lasting peace the *ignorance* (1) *of themselves and* (2) *of the present limits of their knowledge of psychical truth and* (3) *of efficient methods of enlarging knowledge of that sort of truth* in which the philosophers, the theologians, the moralists, the jurists, the economists, the university teachers and other leaders of thought and opinion within the several peoples of the world are steeped and have in the past been steeped? Are not dissent and discord, suppressed and hidden for a time in the written words of a contract, statute, constitution or treaty, apt to come violently to the surface as soon as the force which compelled the verbal agreement

ceases to work or diminishes in relative strength? Is it not the commonest of things to find conscientious men using the same words to express different, and sometimes diametrically different, meanings?—*e.g.,* President Wilson and the German Chancellor in respect of the former's four propositions as the basis for a peace conference. *A league to enforce peace!* May not the Kaiser say that the phrase describes accurately the alliance of Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey? *Win the war for permanent peace!* May not the Kaiser say that the phrase describes accurately the purpose and aim of the German alliance?

If, however, those who are active and influential in the league's organization have reason to believe that the Convention will give a partisan color to its proceedings like that given by Mr. Roosevelt to his recent address at the Maine Republican Convention, I beg you to consider this approval and suggestion as withdrawn and to let me say that in that contingency I shall be unwilling to countenance the league's proceedings in any way. In saying this I am not speaking as in a party sense a Democrat, which I am not, although I voted for Mr. Wilson in 1916. From 1880 to 1908 I voted for the Republican National nominees. In 1912 I voted for the Progressive, Mr. Roosevelt. Having analyzed motives and possible subconscious psychical influences as carefully as I am able, I believe that I am speaking as a Yankee of unmixed descent from some of the first settlers of New England, who, seeking religious liberty for themselves, fled to the wilderness and there, erroneously confusing religion with theology, founded tyrannical theological states, but whose children and children's children, when they discovered the errors of the fathers, separated church from state and voluntarily freed their slaves; I speak as one who in boyhood heard the Higher Law from the lips of Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, Julia Ward Howe and my mother, and whose adolescence was disciplined at a university which

once was the militant foe of moss-grown theological error and which, though no doubt laboring under the yoke of many unsuspected errors, still holds steadfastly to its faith in the prophecy of him who said *Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free;* in short, I speak as a slavery abolitionist, including in slavery legalistic, economic, political and other mental serfs as well as human chattels.

Yours very truly,

S. B. Clarke."

III.

Permanent peace, an illusory hope.

The convention ought not to put forth the hope of permanent peace as a motive for winning the war.

Why?

First: Because the history of the world in general and of this country in particular shows that the hope is illusory. The winning of our revolutionary war did not give the people of this country permanent domestic or foreign peace. The winning of independence and the conversion of the dependent colonies into full sovereignty, democratic states did not do it. The league of those states under the Articles of Confederation did not do it. The closer union of the states under the Constitution did not do it. The winning of the civil war gave us a slightly ruffled peace of about fifty years' duration; but ominous thunder clouds of internal strife had begun to rise above the horizon before the Kaiser brought on the present world conflict and forced us, half awake and both psychically and physically unprepared, into it. The obstacles of conflicting known interests and of conflicting subconscious *stare decisis* mental habits, in the way of permanent international peace, are far greater than the obstacles in the way of domestic peace which have ever confronted the

people of this country; are they not? No human being is competent to make a testamentary will which will certainly have the effect of guaranteeing peace among his descendants for so much as one year after his death. No two human beings are competent to lay down for themselves a plan of future conduct which will certainly guarantee peace between themselves. No marriage of lovers will do it. What ground has anybody for believing that after victory in this war hundreds of millions of human beings will be able to come and keep together in such a close union of mind, heart and will as must exist if peace is to be permanent? Is it not certain that no substantial attempt to form a league of nations for permanent peace will be made? Is it not certain that whatever league may be made will contemplate and provide against the probability of future wars and the necessity of fighting some of them through to their bitter ends?

SECONDLY: Because the holding out of a hope known to be illusory would be dishonest deceit.

THIRDLY: Because the winning of the war by the force of an illusory hope of permanent peace would be apt to fill the uninstructed, simple-minded and credulous folk who constitute the great mass of the populations of this and other countries with a sense of security and a belief that they could let themselves go to sleep again. As in the past, they would be reluctant to subject themselves to the discipline and pains required for the integrated understanding on which alone an integrated fixed will for peace can exist. There can be no permanent peace for us or for the world without an integrated will, steadfastly fixed on that objective, in the masses of human beings. There can be no integrated fixed will without an integrated understanding of psychical truth in the masses of human beings. There can be no integrated understanding as the necessary basis of will without far-reaching discoveries and a great enlargement of the field of knowledge of that

sort of truth. Those who have little but their labor to sell, those who have savings to invest and those who must buy tangible commodities for the maintenance, cultivation and elevation of life must learn to recognize and thwart the *Divide et Impera* policy of the intellectual, social, economic, legalistic, political and militaristic autocrats who, openly or in disguise, infest all the peoples of the world.

FOURTHLY: Because the winning of the war by the force of an illusory hope of permanent peace would, also, be apt to lull to sleep the philosophers, the theologians, the jurists, the moralists, the economists, the university teachers and other leaders of thought and opinion on whom the masses must rely for instruction. As in the past, all but a very few of them would rest content and self-satisfied in ignorance of themselves, in ignorance of the present limits of their knowledge of psychical truth and in ignorance of efficient methods of enlarging the field of knowledge of that sort of truth.

You men and women of unimpeachable sincerity and conscientiousness who are the sponsors for the coming Philadelphia convention! Read over—I beg each one of you to read over the invitation and to ask yourself the questions, What is the matter with me? and Do I know myself? And then, if you still think it right to hold out the hope of permanent peace as a motive for winning the war, I beg you to ask yourself the additional questions, Is this the appropriate time for raising a great issue between myself and those who may continue to agree with me, on the one hand, and those who in all sincerity hold contrary opinions, on the other hand? and Is it not the duty of all of us at this time to discard differences and to adjust our conduct to the maxim *Unite and Win?*

IV.

The prayer.

In 1861 the slave-holding people of Alabama, conscientiously believing that their patriotic duty was determined by the legal conception that the Federal Constitution was a league of independent, full-sovereignty states, joined Virginia, South Carolina and the other seceding states and fought the civil war to the bitter end against those who, as conscientiously, believed that their patriotic duty was determined by the legal conception that the Constitution limited the sovereignty of the several states and effected an integration in one governmental group, with paramount but limited sovereignty, of the several governmental groups of people who inhabited the several states. At the end those Alabama people and their former slaves loyally accepted the decision by battle of the great unsettled constitutional question which theretofore had plagued the country for seventy-five years. Their opponents, with like loyalty, reinstated them with the freedmen as one of the limited sovereignty states and as part of the paramount limited sovereignty nation. Today the grandchildren of the slaves and the grandchildren of the civil war combatants, all wounds healed, all rancor forgotten, and the *"more perfect union"* intended by the Constitution at last and, we may hope, forever accomplished, stand solidly together against the Kaiser.

Verbena is one of Alabama's little villages. The following (a few trivial verbal changes and transpositions excepted) is a description of what is going on there, which was published recently in a Birmingham, Alabama, newspaper by F. Woodruff;—

"There's a little town about sixty miles south of Birmingham on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad called Verbena. The town is well named. It is redolent of the

old-fashioned Southern flower. It is peopled by simple farmer folk. Some substantial citizens of Montgomery keep Summer homes there. There are few sounds about the place. An occasional mule team rattles down a red clay road drawing an empty wagon to the general stores, or bumps pleasantly back toward the Chilton County hills. Occasionally a gentle wind causes the leaves of the oak trees that shade the town to sigh one of those sighs of content that men breathe after a good meal or a good sermon or a well-rendered piece of music. It's as peaceful a place as can be found in Alabama or any other part of the world. It seems modelled after Goldsmith's 'Sweet Auburn.'

There's a new sound there now. It is the Angelus of Strife. It calls the people of Verbena not only to worship, but to deeds. Every afternoon at six o'clock the bell of the Verbena church rings. It continues to ring for two minutes, and while its brazen song is lifted the people of Verbena stand and pray. When the sound begins the observance of its call is universal. Men halt in the street. Wagons are pulled up on the road. Women rise from their knitting or pause in their cookery—for they have early suppers in Verbena. The plowman halts his work and each repeats the prayer. Verbena calls it 'The Prayer of the Bell,' and it is said that men who have never been known to pray before, answer its call dutifully. With heads uncovered and bowed, each man, each woman, each child, each saint and each sinner repeat these words;—

'God bless our President, our Soldiers, our Nation, and guide them to victory.'"

Pause and reflect on the full meaning of the prayer. God's blessing and guidance in his wonderful, mysterious ways! Our President, as constitutional commander-in-chief! Our Soldiers, who are to offer their bodies for sacrifice at his command! Our freedom-loving, right-seeking, battle-unified Nation, as the backer of president and soldiers! Victory of our civil war type! Suppression till victory of all hopes and utterances not serviceable to these! Unite and win!

V.

LEXINGTON DAY; APRIL 19, 1918.

I submit;—

FIRST: That the Convention will do well if it shall emphasize, as motives for winning this war, hope of victory and fear of retrogression to lower and ever lower levels of human life—levels from which mankind may not rise again without enduring again the agonies of the uncounted wars which human beings have been forced to fight in the past; and

SECONDLY: That ways and means of progress to higher levels than any yet attained may well be left for consideration and determination after victory.

SAMUEL B. CLARKE.

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